

No Pain No Gain



Back in February I had the brilliant idea of **signing up** for La Mascareignes, one of Reunion's longest trail races. **A walk in the park compared** to Le Grand Raid, but nevertheless 70kms of mountain trails stood between me and a whole lot of personal glory.

Personal glory because when I arrived in Reunion 6 years ago, I was completely ignorant when it came to hiking and even more so when it came to trail running. Coming from a relatively **flat** city in Australia, and having parents who always made sure that school holidays were spent at the beach and not in the mountains, hiking for me equated to only one thing – pain!

The first ever hike I did in Reunion was in Salazie. The family with whom I was staying at the time took me there for a weekend, armed with a small publication entitled '50 easy hikes in Reunion'. I'd like to stress the word 'EASY'. Now, the walk from Hellbourg up to the gite in Bellouve, is by **NO MEANS** easy for someone who has never hiked before! I was about half way through the torture when I first lay eyes on a 'raideur'. Lycra **clad** and going extremely fast, I couldn't believe what I saw. I turned to my host family in a mix of confusion, disbelief, frustration and a whole lot more ... "What...? Why...? What was that...?" I think I managed to spit out. It was then that I learnt about the **madness** that **unfolds** in Reunion each year in October.

My second hike – Mafate! The mythical Mafate that everyone spoke of. I couldn't wait, although after my first **outing** in Salazie I was somewhat **apprehensive**. And rightly so. I couldn't walk for a week after Mafate, but I certainly wasn't left indifferent at the end of my 3 day escapade.

One particular memory that **stands out** was having breakfast at a gite in Marla. In the distance I could see **a stream of** people walking up the face of what seemed to me to be a vertical wall. A friend informed me that this walk was actually quite **doable** and that the mountain was called le Taïbit. And that on the other side of the **peak** lay Cilaos! I remember being in **sheer** amazement. There was nothing 'doable' about what I was witnessing. I understood quite quickly why Le Grand Raid was so aptly nicknamed *The Diagonal of the Crazyies*.

How anyone could run or even walk for over 160kms was beyond me. And to do it over such demanding terrain, well, I was in absolute **awe**. With time, I started meeting people who had not only attempted, but actually finished this race! And more than once! Madness!! And they were just normal people.



I started hiking more and more and to my amazement a weekend in Mafate gradually became less and less painful. The impossible was becoming, well a little less impossible.

It did take several years to finally understand what my friends meant when they spoke about the 'enjoyment' of trail running. I could never understand how you could 'enjoy' hurting so much. But when the suffering diminishes, it's then that you are privy to the true beauty of Reunion Island – which for me lay far from its lagoons. Through hiking, it was as if I was able to discover Reunion again **from scratch**. And I was hooked.

Injuries have **got the better of me** this year, but before my time in Reunion comes to an end, I'm determined to be at one of those starting (and hopefully finishing!) lines in October. For me, the 3 races that take place at this time of year will always be somewhat magical – what a pity they can't be filmed like the Tour de France to showcase Reunion to the rest of the world!



Vocabulary



<i>to sign up</i>	<i>s'inscrire</i>
<i>a walk in the park</i>	<i>c'est du gâteau</i>
<i>flat</i>	<i>plat</i>
<i>clad</i>	<i>vêtu</i>
<i>madness</i>	<i>la folie</i>
<i>unfold</i>	<i>se déroule</i>
<i>outing</i>	<i>sortie</i>
<i>apprehensive</i>	<i>craintif</i>
<i>stand out</i>	<i>marquer</i>
<i>a stream of</i>	<i>un flot de</i>
<i>doable</i>	<i>faisable</i>
<i>peak</i>	<i>sommet</i>
<i>sheer</i>	<i>pur</i>
<i>be in awe</i>	<i>être impressionné</i>
<i>from scratch</i>	<i>de zéro</i>
<i>injuries</i>	<i>blessures</i>
<i>get the better of someone</i>	<i>l'emporter sur / prendre le dessus sur</i>

